

Midwinter



The last leg

Cree Youth finish 850 km walk
against uranium developments

"Our land, our life"

Grand Chief Coon Come's State
of the Cree Nation Address

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EEYOU ISTCHEE, 3 AM.

WOW, THAT
WAS A FUN
FAMILY
GATHERING!

YEAH, IT
WAS REALLY
NICE.

WHEN I HEARD
THERE WASN'T
GOING TO BE ANY
BOOZE I WASN'T
SURE...

AFTER
UNCLE PAUL
CRASHED HIS TRUCK
WHILE DRUNK
DRIVING...

THE FAMILY
DECIDED TO CUT
BACK ON
DRINKING.

IT'S ALL
RIGHT WITH
ME!

AND IF YOU
DO DECIDE TO
DRINK, PLEASE
DON'T DRINK AND
DRIVE!

KIIPAA!!

driving
back. i'll txt
u when i
arrive. not
gonna txt &
drive!



**The Cree Health Board wishes
you a safe and happy holiday season!**

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The sharing season

by Will Nicholls



Hunter and the big guy

Christmas is the most celebrated holiday in the Western world. While many may decry the commercialism of an event that celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ (who wasn't actually born on December 25), it is nevertheless a magical time of the year. It has gone far beyond its ancient beginnings as a Christian Feast day that rebranded the pagan winter solstice celebrations from pre-Christian times.

Christmas is a time to rejoice and celebrate with family and friends. Some thought and still think that the season's spirited parties and resulting drain on our wallets is a bad thing. In England back in 1644, Oliver Cromwell tried to have Christmas banned because of the festive spirits. We're not about to go that far today, but if friends or family get too festive with an excess of spirits then at least offer them a ride home.

Christmas holds many memories for me and most of them are happy. I proposed to my wife on Christmas and her acceptance was one of the greatest gifts I have received. This year my son Hunter turned three and is fully into the Christmas spirit. A heavy snowfall recently left trees, houses and the streets looking like a Christmas card. He looked outside and said, "It's winter! Do I get gifts now?"

I laughed because the first thing that registered for him is the unavoidable materialism of the holiday. I took some time to explain to him what Christmas really means. That it is a time of sharing with family and friends. It is a time of

helping out, whether it is Christmas dinner or for a person in need. It is a time of happiness and thinking of others and how much they mean to you.

He got the message and the spirit. I realized this when, the next day, he shared his tiny box of Smarties with me and said he loved me. Normally he never shares this special treat, but Christmas has the power to appeal to the best of our natures, even for a three-year-old boy. Taking the time to really talk about the holiday season, and seeing the effect it had, made this a special moment for me. The happiness that I saw in his behaviour and the glow in his face made me feel young again. That sense of wonder and so much more as seen through the eyes of a child is an early Christmas gift for me.

I encourage all parents to help our younger generation understand this special time beyond its promise of instant gratification. I know that there are many people out there who experience much less of the happiness and joy that I have been blessed with. The holidays can be a time of sadness, which is compounded by the constant expressions of joy during the season.

Like a child, we should open our hearts and let them know they are not alone, especially at Christmas. At Christmas that goodness which is inside of all of us is something to celebrate and share freely.

On behalf of all of us at the Nation I wish you the best and may you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

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Joshua Iserhoff and Richard Shecapio

photo by:
Jeremy East

The supreme Bean

by Sonny Orr



Every morning after waking, I fire up the coffee machine, switch on the computer (it used to be the television that would flicker on), then check out the global scene.

One morning, waking up a little later than usual, I switched my routine to making breakfast first. Still groggy, I reached for a can of corned beef hash and opened it up. My pan already on the stovetop, I flipped the can onto my pan and amazingly, beans and wieners flowed out and splattered around a bit. Oh no! What a start, I hoped I wouldn't burn my scrambled eggs or toast. Finally, coffee hits me solidly into reality, then, the beans... wow, lots of protein and taste, no fat, just enough wiener, pretty good! The bean came through for me, feeding me just enough energy until lunch, and plenty of conversation starters throughout the day. Conversations like, Hey, did you hear that? Was that a moose? Stuff like that.

Ahhh, the lowly bean, once regarded as a simple lentil that had no use in a meat-and-potato world, the poor man's meat pie, the belittling of the bean has carried out throughout the modern ages as it sank to a food for anyone without taste. Meats, poultry and fish are real foods that have substance and are chewable, so therefore, noshing on a bean seems to be the last hope, the final can in the cupboard, the only reliance against starvation or a desperate trip out in a violent storm to the store. It's that type of food.

Then, along came the popular kidney bean, touted as the king of beans, one so powerful it could destroy the ozone layer. This bean could spice up a soup, a salad, a chili, a martini (a favourite of the Mexican spy agency), a failing love life, even re-inflate the Hindenburg. Its final by-product is a staple ingredient for weapons of mass destruction. Yes, being the tastiest bean out there does have its merits.

On a darker note during the residential school era, nutritional studies were con-

ducted on the effects of different foods on people. In Fort George, it must have been a bean study, because that's all there was to eat for a long time. I remember one outdoor excursion when the supervisor brought a few extremely large cans of beans for sustenance, in case we couldn't catch anything else to eat. Come supper-time, we couldn't go on without another plate of beans, yet more beans and more. At some point in time, the beans ceased and somewhat normal fare came back to the daily menu. The deadly bean supply was finally exhausted.

The bean, aside from being the butt of many jokes, is actually quite good for your health. I suppose that rejecting a food associated with explosive side effects in the digestive system and with assaults on our neighbours' sensitivities wasn't really up there with refusing to eat your broccoli, for example. But the bean, with all its mystery and mystique, myth and legendary potency, does have scads of protein and energizing starches. Ohhh, the notorious bean.

Finally, the Beans that deserve a capital letter are notably the famous British Mr. Bean and sometime heartthrob Sean Bean, they being at the top of the current list of famous Beans of history. Mr. Bean, having the ideal name to begin with, is legend amongst the few Beans we know. The famous scene with Mr. Bean with the Christmas turkey stuck to his head comes to mind this time of the year and come Sunday, the sitting down and standing up during church service is another classic. As far as keeping tabs of muscle-bound hennmen, all I know is that simply having the name Bean is good for you, so bully for Sean! Yep, the silly human bean.

For me, the bean is one of the most important foods on earth, right up there with pizza. To have the opportunity to eat beans, I wouldn't think twice. Just eat beans. Wait a minute: did you hear that? The moose is over there now!

the Nation is published every two weeks
by Beesum Communications
This paper contains 70% recycled materials

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

INDIVIDUALS & INSTITUTIONS:

\$60 PLUS TAXES, US: \$90, ABROAD: \$110
PAYABLE TO BEESUM COMMUNICATIONS

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PUBLICATION MAIL #40015005
ISSN #1206-2642

The Nation IS A MEMBER OF:

THE JAMES BAY CREE
COMMUNICATIONS SOCIETY,

CIRCLE OF ABORIGINAL
CONTROLLED PUBLISHERS,

MAGAZINES CANADA
QUEBEC COMMUNITY

NEWSPAPER ASSN.
CANADIAN COMMUNITY

NEWSPAPERS ASSN.
LES HEBDOS SÉLECT DU QUÉBEC

We acknowledge the financial support of the
Government of Canada through

the Canada Periodical Fund of the Department of
Canadian Heritage.

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Infighting among the faithful

Dispute within Mistissini's Living Water Assembly prompts lawsuit

by Josh Grant

Controversy is roiling the Living Water Assembly in Mistissini, where the board of directors of the local Pentecostal church has taken former pastor Joseph Blacksmith to court. The members of the board state that in the past year Blacksmith has assumed control of their church building on 304 Amisk Street, withheld access to church assets and documents, created confusion amongst the church community and obliged them to hold separate church meetings at the Mistissini Lodge.

According to litigation filed by Living Water board members Tony Neeposh, Charlie Mianscum, Helen Petawabano, Virginia Coonishish, Sarah Taylor and Pastor Johnny Dixon, Blacksmith has retained possession of the church vehicle, incorporated a Canadian non-profit organization under the identical name "Living Water Assembly" and even attempted to access the church bank accounts, which prompted the Board to contact Mistissini police. Blacksmith has moved to disaffiliate Living Water Assembly from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC), which the church has belonged to since its inception in the 1970s.

The plaintiff's lawyer, Benoit Amuyot, told the Nation that Blacksmith's actions amount to an "illegal takeover".

"When we received their defense we understood that they were not just trying to create another religious organization," said Amuyot, "but rather to take control of the previously existing Living Water Assembly. [Blacksmith did all of this] without following the local church constitution and bylaws."

Documents obtained from Amuyot's law firm, Cain Lamarre Casgrain and Welles, state that Living Water Assembly's board of directors filed suit against Blacksmith, Jeremiah Abel Mianscum and Roger Gingras (directors of the newly incorporated non-profit) only as a last resort after a number of unsuccessful attempts at dialogue with the defendant and an ongoing controversy over the name "Living Water Assembly".

Since moving to disaffiliate the Mistissini Pentecostal community from the PAOC in January, Blacksmith has been holding meetings at the Living Water Assembly with members of the local Pentecostal community and another church, the Perch River Fellowship. Interestingly enough, the Perch River Fellowship was formed in 1990 when Henry Mianscum, then pastor of the Living Water Assembly, decided to break away from the congregation



Oujé-Bougoumou justice facility

and form a new religious affiliation separate from any provincial or national religious organization.

Blacksmith was originally instated as head pastor of Living Water Assembly on April 7, 2013, replacing long-term leader Pastor Dixon. However, Dixon was re-designated as pastor in December of the same year after health issues lead to Blacksmith's hospitalization.

The lawsuit claims that Blacksmith returned to the church in January 2014 and called a public meeting to seek community support for his "new vision" of the church's future. Following a second meeting on February 1, Blacksmith allegedly had the locks of the church building on Amisk Street changed, subsequently occupying the location and operating the facilities under the pre-existing name without support from the church's members, its established board of directors or Pastor Dixon.

The plaintiff argues that Blacksmith used his authority as pastor to call the January 20 and February 1 meetings without informing or notifying any of the board members, and states that at the first meeting, "accusations were made against Pastor Johnny Dixon, the Board of Directors of the Mistissini Pentecostal Church and PAOC District of Quebec and allusions were made to disaffiliation."

According to the same documents, the meeting on February 1 aimed to "validate the decision to disaffiliate by encouraging members of the public to follow the new 'vision' of Pastor Joseph Blacksmith," and "...had the effect of creating confusion amongst the members of the Living Water Assembly and the public in general leading them to



HANDS-ON



LEARNING

“In the greenhouse I wanted kids to know where the food comes from. We were able to grow our own plants, and show them cool things, like how a strawberry actually comes from a flower.”

Centre encourages a love for science in Whapmagoostui-Kuujjuarapik

by Joel Barde

Alanah Heffez was impressed when she heard that the Centre d'études nordiques was building a new community science centre in Whapmagoostui-Kuujjuarapik.

It was 2009, and she was organizing science activities for the Cree Health Board. She saw enormous potential in the new project, which was about to be constructed.

The Community Science Centre was going to be a high-end institution, with a classroom, video projection and an interactive museum display. It would offer science resources in Cree and Inuktitut.

Here was a building that could tie the communities to the Centre d'études nordiques (CEN), a research centre established by the

Université Laval in 1971 to study the northern ecosystems and geosystems.

But there was one problem. There wasn't anyone to reach out and help connect the community and research centre to the actual communities.

“The idea of the Community Science Centre was great. But I thought that just having a building wouldn't be enough to get the community involved,” said Heffez.

So she initiated a collaboration between Youth Fusion – a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing dropout rates amongst Quebec students – and the Université Laval in order to have a

full-time coordinator to work out of the centre.

The coordinator works in cooperation with the two schools and summer camps in Whapmagoostui-Kuujjuarapik.

They run science workshops and activities, directly in the schools, in the Community Science Centre, and even outdoors. They also help facilitate meetings between youth and the science professionals who work at the centre.

Last year, Gaëlle Bailon-Poujol filled the position. She says the focus of her work is to facilitate hands-on learning as well as hosting activities that inspire curiosity and a love of learning.

“In the greenhouse I wanted kids to know where the food comes from. We were able to grow our own plants, and show them cool things, like how a strawberry actually comes from a flower.”

“I like being so close to nature and wildlife. You can walk out of your house and be in total nature. You can go out and be on the beach and river. It’s calm and the people are so welcoming.”

that a good example of this happened last spring.

“Doing science in a hands-on way is the only real way to learn science,” says Heffez. “Textbooks have the conclusions. But science is about the process of discovery. You need to get your hands dirty.”

A portrait of a woman with dark hair, smiling, wearing a dark jacket with a fur-lined hood. The background is a bright, snowy landscape.

With the continued involvement of Youth Fusion, she says that the centre will play a positive role in encouraging a love of science in the young people of Whapmagoostui-Kuujuarapik.

Peace, love, health and prosperity for the New Year 2015.
May our Cree traditions continue to flourish and be preserved
for future generations.

8 *the Nation* December 26, 2014 www.nationnews.ca *Happy New Year to all*

New resource committee created

The Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government, which replaced the Municipality of James Bay, formally created a Natural Resources Committee November 27 to review and make recommendations over resource issues in the North.

Twelve members were appointed for three years: Daniel Bergeron, Martin Filion, Marie-Ève Gosselin, Aurora M. Hernandez, Marc-Antoine Lajoie, Cameron McLean, Stéphane Ouellet, Alan Penn, Geoffrey Quaille, Nadia Saganash, Régis Simard and Pascal Tremblay. All committee members, according to the regional government, have expertise in the natural resources sector.

Hospital wedding

Oujé-Bougoumou's Gordon Mianscum and Nancy Capassit took their marriage vows at the North Bay Regional Health Centre with the help of family and friends on December 7, only two days after Mianscum proposed to his new bride.

Well known in and outside the Cree communities of James Bay, Mianscum is terminally ill with bladder cancer and is not expected to leave the hospital. A car accident when he was 13 left him a paraplegic but everyone who knows him remembers his smile and joy of life despite his condition.

Together for 24 years, Mianscum and Capassit are parents to two children.

"I have been with Gordon for 24 years, but I am just sad knowing he will not be around long," Capassit told the CBC.

C.R.E.E. Hockey and Broomball Tournament in Val-d'Or

The 34th annual Cree Regional Events and Entertainment (C.R.E.E.) Senior Hockey and Broomball tournament took place December 4-7 at the Centre Air Creebec in Val-d'Or. Featuring teams from Ontario, Quebec and one all the way from Nunavut, men and women battled it out on the ice in Women's recreational broomball, Women's hockey and competitive broomball along with Men's A, B1, B2 and Old Timers 40+ divisions.

In Women's Recreational Broomball first place went to the Pikogan Thunder, second to the Lac Simon Lakers and third to Rapid Lake. The Waswanipi Flames and the Mistissini North Lights took fourth and fifth place respectively.

In the competitive Women's Broomball division the Wemindji Ice Stars took first place honours, beating out the Waswanipi Eagles 4-3 in a tight final game. The Nemaska Capitals beat the Waskaganish Starlites 3-1 to claim third place and Lac Simon Women finished in the fifth spot followed by the Lac Simon Algonqueens, the Mistissini Glaciers and the Chisasibi Northstars.

Women's hockey saw the Val-d'Or Iceholics beat out Mistissini Mustangs 1-0 in a tight, low scoring final game, third place went to the Wemindji Lady Wolves, fourth to Pikogan, fifth to the Waskaganish Panthers, sixth to Manawaki, seventh to the Oujé Lady Hawks and eighth to Lac Simon.

Men's B1 division hockey ended with a high scoring 6-4 victory by the Mistissini Chummys over the Waswanipi



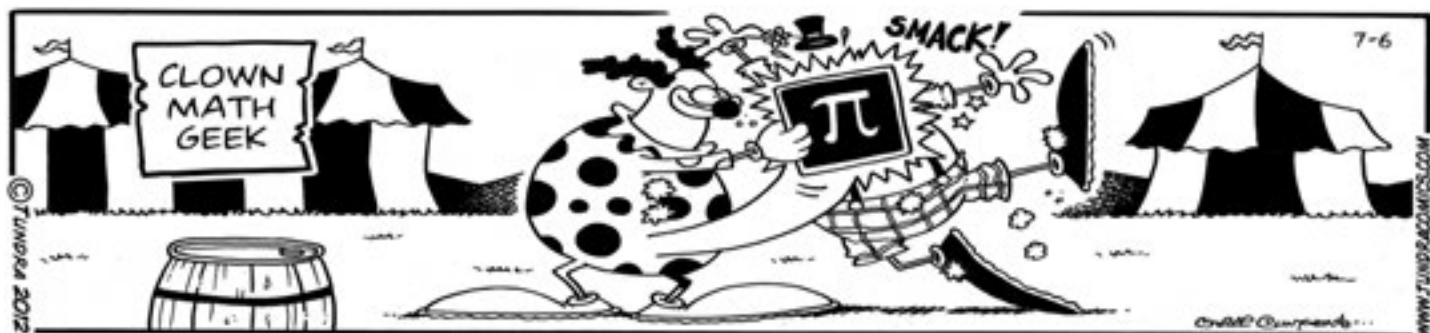
The Northern Lights

Drummers, with the Waskaganish Hawks, Pikogan Youth and Manawaki Stars taking the third, fourth and fifth positions.

In men's B2 hockey action the Winneway Hawks brought home first place with a convincing 8-3 victory over the Chisasibi Silver Bullets. The Lac Simon Penguins finished in third, the Waswanipi Underdogs in fourth and Rapid Lake in fifth.

The Val-d'Or Old Timers earned first place in Old Timers 40+ competition, edging out the Wemindji Paint Hills 4-2 in the final. The Chisasibi Relics finished in third place and the Waskaganish Ex-Wings in fourth.

Class A action featured some tough competition with the Waswanipi Chiefs winning first place over the Wemindji Wolves by a final score of 4-1. The Ottawa Renegades finished in third, Rouyn Bar O'Tooles in fourth and the Nunavik Ummimaks in fifth. Other teams competing in the Class A Division included the Waskaganish Wings, Moose Factory Scrappers, Eastmain 9ers and the Chisasibi Hunters.



“Our land, our life”

Grand Chief Coon Come’s State of the Cree Nation Address

by Amy German

A lot can happen in a year, particularly when you are at the helm of one of the most powerful First Nations in Canada. This is why it is always interesting to go directly to the source and find out exactly how Eeyou Istchee’s Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come viewed 2014.

Reflecting on the year and expressing his hopes for the next, the Grand Chief shares his thoughts, impressions and feelings on the past year in this annual Q-&A session.

While it may be hard to summarize the past 365 days in a few pages, Coon Come reveals his moments of pride, his heartfelt passion for leadership, his admiration for the many accomplishments of the Cree people in 2014 and shares private moments and thoughts that have been meaningful to him.

The Nation (TN): What were your biggest and brightest moments of 2014 as Grand Chief of Eeyou Istchee?

Grand Chief Coon Come (GC): Over the course of 2014 what comes to mind as bright spots is not so much any specific moment, but certain events and initiatives we have put in place that have made me feel that we have hit the mark in making progress on our overall agenda.

During 2014, for example, we took the very important messages that we gave to our Cree youth during the first Roundtable on Capacity Building directly into the communities so that we could reach a wider audience of youth along with other community members. We explained how the history of the Cree Nation since the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement has been a series of struggles, agreements, major initiatives, all of which have been intended to put into place the elements we needed to establish ourselves as an effective Indigenous Nation.

We also explained that now that the major elements have been put into place the future of the Cree Nation will unfold with our Cree Youth in the centre. It will be up to our youth to develop the skills to administer and manage our Cree Nation within our communities and over the territory that we now have jurisdiction over and in which we now have a major role to play. We have, with our Roundtables, tried to encourage and inspire our youth to dream big and to work hard to achieve those dreams. This will remain a central focus of my personal vision and a guide for my work.

What I have also realized over the course of this past year is just how much our successes and achievements in

Eeyou Istchee have begun to inform and have an impact on what is happening with respect to the advancement of Aboriginal rights across the country.

Whether it was the milestone decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in the *Tsilhqot’in* case, or whether it was unique and innovative agreements with resource development companies, I believe that our experience has demonstrated to the world that it is possible to recognize Indigenous rights and to give expression to those rights in a way that can work for our First Nations, for neighbouring communities and for industries. Everyone is starting to take notice of our accomplishments. For me, these developments in advancing Aboriginal rights has been a vindication of the wisdom underlying all our struggles and all our hard work over the course of 40 years.

I have taken our story to many parts of Canada in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous forums and our story and our lessons are understood and appreciated.

You know, in the kind of work that I do, it can be extremely stressful at times, it can be draining of energy, and it is always eventful. For me, every day above ground is a good day!

TN: What were the darkest or most trying moments as Grand Chief?

GC: I don’t think there were any really dark days in this past year. There is, of course, always sadness that we feel on a personal level whenever we lose people who were close to us, and there is special sadness when we lose another Elder. I think back, for example, about the late David Mianscum from Mistissini, whose love of the land was an inspiration to so many people in the community



Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come and Youth Grand Chief Joshua Iserhoff

and to those people from outside the community who had the privilege of knowing him. Every one of our communities have their own “David Mianscums”, those Elders who quietly continue their life on the land and show us all the importance of our connection to the land.

On the professional level, I have been disappointed that we haven’t made more progress in establishing the Cree Development Corporation. I would have preferred by now that we would be further along in the creation of CDC so that we could have a solid vehicle in place to engage, as the Cree Nation, in the development of Eeyou Istchee, and that we could move forward with our agenda of creating wealth and creating the jobs for our people. The establishment of the CDC is an important element in our ability to fulfill the dream and the opportunity for the Cree Nation to become the major economic force in northern Quebec. But, we will continue to work in that direction and look forward to the CDC’s establishment as soon as possible.

TN: Did you meet every goal that you set out to accomplish in the last 12 months?

GC: As hard as we might work as leaders and as hard as we may try, we never accomplish all the goals we set for ourselves. But I think that in 2014 we did a good job of actually achieving, or at least making progress, on all the things we wanted to do at the beginning of the year.

A major highlight of the year was when we inaugurated the new Eeyou Istchee/James Bay Regional Government in Waskaganish last January. Since that inauguration we have had the first year of meetings of the Regional Government and we are well on our way to developing the kind of working relationship with our Jamésien neighbours that we had hoped for. Our meetings have been respectful, cordial and collaborative. We have slowly been putting into place the administration of the Regional Government, which will allow us to follow through on decisions and to take initiatives that reflect the interests of the region as a whole. Continuing to lay the foundation for

the future of the Regional Government will still be a priority for the next year.

I was pleased when we were able to find a creative solution to the problems related to the Baril/Moses Agreement, which had to do with the extension of Cree rights in forestry over the height of land in the southern part of the Mistissini territory. Fortunately, we did not need to proceed to the courts to resolve this matter and we were able to work closely with Quebec to identify a solution that could work for both parties.

I had hoped that in 2014 we might be able to resolve the impasse in our negotiations with Canada pursuant to the New Relationship Agreement, but I regret that this has not happened yet. We will be continuing in our efforts to find ways to finalize the outstanding negotiations related to governance. This remains a priority for this next year.

During 2014, I was pleased to hear the news from the Community Assembly in Washaw Sibi when they made their final selection of sites for the new village. The Grand Council was there to assist them all along the



way. They have important work to do now within the region to remove any potential obstacles to their project. We will be working closely with the leadership of Washaw Sibi to move this important file forward and to help them in addressing any potential problems they may encounter in fulfilling their vision of having a place to call home.

In that same vein, we have made progress in our work with MoCreebec in assisting them to address their long-standing claims for recognition of their rights to have benefits under the JBNQA. We have been working on the development of a court case, which is being put forward, and we will continue to support the MoCreebec community in achieving their objectives.

TN: Who had the biggest impact on you in the past year?

GC: There is no question that for me family always comes first and it is always my family that inspires me to continue with my work. And it all starts with my wife, MaryAnn, who has always stood by my side and who

is my confidant, my unofficial advisor and my source of strength. And it is my children who are a constant reminder of why I am doing the work I do. Also, I couldn't do the work I do without the support from the Chiefs with whom we have joined together to journey on the path of Cree nation-building. Without our unity we would be nowhere, and it is because of the integrity and commitment of the Chiefs and their commitment to unity that we have made the progress we have seen in the Cree Nation.

TN: How have the Crees fared under the new Liberal government and its Plan Nord 2 and how is this good for Crees?

GC: It has always been the Cree approach to find ways of working as best we can with any government that is in power. On the provincial side, we have worked with both Liberal governments and PQ governments and we have achieved successes with both. We have worked diligently to establish a good rapport with the current Liberal government and with Philippe Couillard as Premier. I have

had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Couillard on numerous occasions, including during a very interesting trip to Iceland, and I have had the opportunity of explaining to him the Cree view on Plan Nord as well as the content of the "Cree Vision of Plan Nord." Mr. Couillard understands very well the central role that the Cree Nation will play in implementing any projects under the Plan Nord and he has expressed his openness in working closely with us on all matters pertaining to the Plan Nord.

We all know that the economy is in a low period right now, but there are still some projects going forward and there will be some other initiatives taking place under the umbrella of the Plan Nord, and we will keep a very close eye on these developments and we will ensure that there will be Cree input and Cree involvement all along the way in keeping with our principles and with the position we have taken regarding the Plan Nord.

TN: Are there any other major economic/development deals that you feel should be highlighted here?

GC: In keeping with our fundamental principles of Cree consent and Cree involvement, we are working closely with the Cree Nation of Wemindji to implement their IBA with Goldcorp on the Eleanore project. This project has already resulted in significant employment for Crees and very useful and long-lasting enterprises operated by Wemindji people.

Also, we have been working closely with Mistissini in ensuring that they have concluded a very important IBA with Stornoway on the Renard project. We have also helped ensure that there is Cree involvement in the construction of the extension of Highway

167 from Chibougamau to the Renard project site. This has been of significant benefit to the people of Mistissini.

TN: *The Cree have been very vocal in their ongoing battle against uranium mining while other mining projects have been celebrated like the Whabouchi Project. What has made the Whabouchi Project such a standout, while the Matoush project remains something the Cree have unified to fight?*

GC: We have made it very clear that the Grand Council and the Cree Nation Government support the position taken by Mistissini in opposing the proposed Matoush uranium project. The Matoush project simply has not met the Cree test of social acceptability. Our primary concern, and the primary concern of Mistissini, is with the health of the environment. If there are projects which could potentially have negative impacts on the environment at a level which affects the Cree population and our ability to secure a healthy supply of food, then we must oppose such a project. It is our very livelihood which is at stake. The health of our environment is absolutely fundamental to our survival. We will continue to oppose any form of uranium mining on Cree Territory.

The Nemaska community, together with the Grand Council and the Cree Nation Government, has looked closely at the proposed lithium mining project and we have determined that the project is one whose impacts are not potentially catastrophic. The impacts can be contained, they can be mitigated and they can be solved in a way that can still be respectful of the Cree way of life. We will, of course, actively monitor the environmental impacts of this project before, during



and after the project's life, but we do not believe that this project will potentially harm the environment for the thousands of years that uranium mining would. We simply do not have the same comfort when it comes to uranium mining. We are not convinced that radioactive materials will not enter the waters, the food chain and we are not at all convinced about the security of the disposal of radioactive waste materials from the mining process.

To act responsibly and wisely, we must assess different mining activities as to their environmental consequences on a case-by-case basis. We have stated many times that the Cree Nation is open to the possibility of mining in our territory, and this is still the case, but at the same time, we will never relinquish our duty to be diligent and cautious. We have taken this position based on what we believe is the prudent approach in consideration of the importance of a healthy environment for ourselves and for our future generations who will continue to rely on the land to sustain them. This is a

fundamental Cree principle that we will continue to abide by.

TN: *How about major accomplishments by the Grand Council/CRA? Is there any particular department or event that you would like to mention or showcase to the Crees?*

GC: In general, I would like to express my personal gratitude to the entire staff of the Grand Council and of the Cree Nation Government without whose dedication and commitment we would not have been able to realize our achievements and who have helped us stay on the course of building the Cree Nation.

During 2014 we undertook a major reorganization of the Grand Council/Cree Nation Government in order to have our government reflect our new governance authorities and our new jurisdictional realities. This realignment of our administration with our new responsibilities will make it possible for us to more effectively fulfill our new governance roles within Eeyou Istchee and we will be in a better position to realize the vision of our



**The entire Goldcorp – Éléonore team
wishes you a joyful Holiday Season
and a happy New Year.**



The Holiday Season is a wonderful time to rejoice. We wish to extend to you our best wishes at this tradition-filled time of the year. May this festive season be filled with joy and pleasant times with your family and loved ones.

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TN: *What traditional teaching or words from the Cree Elders have resonated most with you in 2014?*

GC: What resonated most for me this past year was something that came up during this last 2014 Annual General Assembly in Waswanipi. During a discussion on the Cree Nation position on our involvement in resource development and during discussions on forestry, energy and mining, the Elders reminded us of an important adage that has guided us for many years: "Our land, our life". This pretty well sums it up for me, and that is really the basis of our success. Whenever I am reminded of this fundamental principle I feel more grounded and know we have been on the right track.

TN: *Were there any particular moments of action taken by the Cree Youth, Elders, or community members that have really impressed you?*

GC: I have been extremely proud of the actions of our Cree youth in walking from Eeyou/Istchee to Montreal to express once again the Cree stand against uranium exploration and mining activities.

Led by Youth Grand Chief Joshua Iserhoff, our youth have been great ambassadors for the Cree Nation. They are rising to the occasion, and they are taking the lead in public awareness of our position. It is exactly these kinds of actions on the part of our youth that express their commitment and their desire to make a contribution to the building of the Cree Nation that I had hoped for. I welcome

this action, I embrace it, and I cannot be more proud of our Cree youth.

When it comes to our Elders, I wanted to share a very touching moment for me. I learned a couple of months ago that my father and his good friend Matthew Matoush were making plans once again to go out on the land to pursue their favourite activities – hunting, fishing and trapping. Both my father and his friend are in their late 70s and they still have the energy and the enthusiasm to do what they love most. I was left with a profound sense of pride and also gratitude for these two Elders. I know there are Elders in all our communities who still do the same thing, and all these Elders are our rocks and our reminders of the importance of the land for all of us. We are all stronger and we all benefit in so many ways when people are living off the land.

TN: *Is there anything else that you would like to say?*

GC: As I reflect on where we are now in the growth of the Cree Nation, I remain convinced that we are still on the right track – the track of building a unique and healthy Indigenous Nation. All the potential is still there for us to fulfill the vision of becoming masters of our own destiny, and at the same time, all the responsibility is still there for all of us in Eeyou Istchee to roll up our sleeves and do what we can to realize that potential and make it happen. I continue to ask all Eeyou/Eenou to do what we can to encourage and support our Youth to be the best they can be so that they can proudly make their contribution to this honourable calling.

In the meantime, I want to wish everyone in Eeyou Istchee, all of our staff, the staff of all our Cree entities, our neighbours and friends a very happy holiday season and the best for the New Year.

"I have been extremely proud of the actions of our Cree youth in walking from Eeyou/Istchee to Montreal to express once again the Cree stand against uranium exploration and mining activities."





Knitwear love
A brief Christmas story of
sharing and inter-cultural
solidarity

By Véronique Doutreloux





I am a nurse and I work with Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), the James Bay Cree Board of Health and Social Services, and I have lived in Chibougamau for a long time.

Last December, I was on a mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, specifically in North Kivu, where I was in charge of a mobile clinic. We visited five villages including three camps for internally displaced persons (refugees), which were very isolated and difficult to access because of poor roads and constant fighting between armed groups. Our work was to provide medication, oversee the quality of care, deliver babies, and to treat cases of malnutrition.

North Kivu is a very hilly region that is surprisingly cold and where it rains 80% of the year. There is great poverty, and people live in huts made of grass and mud, without water, plumbing or electricity.

One evening in December, while returning from my four-day tour on impassable roads and after again caring for newborns with severe hypothermia, a few of whom died, I wrote an e-mail to friends describing my distress and asking them if they could help us by knitting small hats. Two of them are from Mistissini and another four are from Chibougamau.

A few weeks later during a short vacation in Tanzania, my husband Albert brought me dozens of magnificent beanies and extraordinarily warm socks, all hand made by these generous ladies! There were also flannel blankets and... maple syrup! My team and I were so happy and we distributed these treasures with joy.

Given the political situation in the region, I could not take photos of happy moms, but I will always keep in my memory their bright eyes and smiles. That's why I want to express my thanks to these women who initiated this movement of sharing and inter-cultural North-South solidarity.

From Mistissini: Minnie Bosum and her sister, Maryann Bosum, bonnet fairies.

From Chibougamau: Josée Lévesque, Rose Savard, Marie Courte, Lolita and Hélène Gaudreault, sock wizards.

A huge thank you to all and happy holidays



The last leg

Cree Youth finish 850-km walk against uranium development

Written by Jeremy East and Joel Barde Photos by Jeremy East

After walking hundreds of kilometres through punishing late-autumn weather, a group of Cree youth arrived in Montreal December 15 to deliver the message they had carried since leaving Mistissini three weeks before: No uranium mining in Eeyou Istchee.

The mood on the final leg of the march was joyous. Roughly a hundred people accompanied the group of 21 Cree walkers on the walk

along Papineau Street to Place des Arts in downtown Montreal.

Seven of the walkers, including Youth Grand Chief Joshua Iserhoff, made the trek in its entirety – all 850 kilometres from Mistissini to Montreal – braving tumultuous weather that ranged from rain to a frigid -28 Celsius.

“You know that Guns and Roses song, ‘November Rain’? I kept singing that along the way!” joked Iserhoff.

Along with Mistissini Youth Chief Amy Linton and Youth Ambassador Nicholas Wapachee, Iserhoff delivered the message that they would later repeat at the final hearing on uranium development by the Bureau d’audiences publiques sur l’environnement (BAPE).

“We do not want uranium mining in Eeyou Istchee,” he said. “It’s a simple message. We do not want our land and water contaminated.”





The walkers were joined by Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come as they approached Place des Arts and the Hyatt Regency hotel where the BAPE hearing was to be held that evening. Iserhoff, Linton, Coon Come and Mistissini Chief Richard Shecapio addressed the media surrounded by vocal supporters.

"This is something that we take to heart," said Linton. "The radioactivity

that would affect Mistissini for thousands of years would be devastating to our people and all the people of Quebec."

Ten days earlier, Iserhoff and Linton met Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Geoffrey Kelly, a spokesperson for the Minister of Natural Resources, and key members of opposition parties. The National Assembly even passed an all-party

motion recognizing the Cree Youth March on December 5.

The Cree Nation has been staunchly opposed to uranium development since the former Liberal government of Jean Charest promoted the industry as part of the Plan Nord, saying as many as 20 uranium mines could be developed in the North. At the Matoush site north of Mistissini, Strateco





Resources invested about \$120 million preparing a future mine.

That project was shelved last year after the then-PQ government declared a moratorium on uranium mining and launched the public hearings.

After months of consultations with communities that would be affected by the uranium industry, representatives from the Cree Nation Government, Cree Health Board, and the Kativik Corporation participated in the final BAPE hearing.

During his testimony, Coon Come said the youth march signalled that Cree opposition to uranium is genuine and that young Crees are legitimately concerned.

Coon Come said he has grown frustrated by an argument he'd

heard many times throughout the BAPE hearings, that the land in which the uranium mining is to take place is uninhabited.

Nothing, he said, could be further from the truth.

"We occupy and use the entire area of Eeyou Istchee," Coon Come insisted. "We engage in our traditional activities on an extensive network of hunting and trapping grounds. The animals that sustain us move throughout this whole territory. And we move with them."

He then outlined a number of aspects of uranium mining he finds particularly troubling.

First and foremost, radiation poisoning poses a health risk to people and animals.

Coon Come noted a group of Sept-Iles doctors who have vowed to leave the region if uranium mining there goes forward.

He also expressed scepticism at industry reassurances that they could deal with a potential spill or contamination, especially given that tailings would remain toxic for thousands of years.

"There is no doubt that the brunt of this clean-up would fall on the government and small communities," he argued.

"The forests and waters of Eeyou Istchee should not be jeopardized. They are inextricably linked to the identity of the Cree people and must be protected. We do not like what we have learned. And we do not consent."

"The forests and waters of Eeyou Istchee should not be jeopardized. They are inextricably linked to the identity of the Cree people and must be protected. We do not like what we have learned. And we do not consent."



CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL SITUATION

Fellow citizens:

According to Section 474.1 of the *Cities and Towns Act* (L.R.Q., c. C-19), it is my pleasure to provide you with the information on the financial situation of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government. This operation takes place several weeks before the submission of the budget predictions for 2015, which should take place on January 30, 2015. This submission is the responsibility of the Regional Government. This report covers the following items:

- > Consolidated financial statements for the year 2013 and report from the independent auditor;
- > Three-year program for the capital expenditures for the years 2014-2015-2016;
- > Financial situation for the year 2014;
- > Remuneration and expenditures of the members of Council;
- > General orientations of the 2015 budget;
- > List of contracts granted between October of 2013 and September of 2014.

LATEST FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

During the preparation of the 2013 budgets, the main office predicted total revenues of \$13,842,123 while we finished the year with total revenues of \$13,965,163. Even with this positive balance of \$123,000, we notice a reduction in the taxation revenues of \$658,000 compared to the initial budget. This was caused mainly by the dismantlement of some facilities of the James Bay Power Corporation and Hydro-Québec.

Globally, by including the localities of Valcanton, Villebois and Radisson along with the forestry funds, the Municipality de Baie-James had a budget surplus of \$870,791 for the year 2013.

THREE-YEAR PROGRAM FOR THE CAPITAL EXPENDITURES 2014-2015-2016

During the year 2014, the Regional Government has predicted capital expenditures of \$357,200 to complete the following work:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| > Posts and civic numbers for resort sites | \$15,000 |
| > 5 recording flow meters | \$10,000 |
| > Boat launching ramp at Waswanipi Lake | \$30,000 |
| > Rest area and boat launching ramp
(Trans-taiga Road, LG-3 area) | \$75,000 |
| > Purchase of two pick-up trucks | \$80,000 |
| > FTQC work in the localities | \$147,200 |

PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS FOR 2014

The consolidated budget for the year anticipates balanced revenues and expenditures of \$13,566,380. Under the governance agreement that created the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government, the tax rates are fixed for a period

of five years; however, the Government of Québec has also committed to financing the implementation of the Regional Government for a period of 5 years.

REAL ESTATE WEALTH OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

The year 2014 is the first of the three-year roll 2014-2015-2016 introduced on October 26, 2013. The total real estate wealth is \$389,466,100, including \$364,798,060 in taxable real estate and \$24,668,040 in non-taxable real estate values.

REMUNERATION AND EXPENDITURES

As required by the Act, here are the numbers indicating the 2014 remuneration of the members of the Council of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government and the localities, including the expense allowances related to the position:

	Chairperson	Vice-chair	Councillors/members
EIJBRG	\$52,462	\$40,000/year	\$17,487
Radisson	\$25,897	\$100/month	\$8,632
Valcanton	\$10,000	\$100/month	\$5,000
Villebois	\$15,000		\$5,000
Executive Committee (EIJBRG)			\$30,000

- A 33.33% share of the remuneration of the EIJBRG members is paid on a fixed basis and the other 66.67% is paid based on the presence in person to the meetings of the Council.

GENERAL ORIENTATIONS OF THE 2015 BUDGET

We remind you that the year 2014 was a year of transition following the enactment of the *Act establishing the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government*, which established the Regional Government on the Category III lands in the Eeyou Istchee James Bay territory. This is a successor to the Municipalité de Baie-James.

In terms of continuity, some of the highlights of the budget that will please our citizens include the fact that, in our major orientations for 2015, our priorities will be to continue the consolidation efforts of the Regional Government. Also, the development of natural resources represents one of the major challenges in the development of our territory.

It is with great pride that I say thank you to my colleagues on Council and to the entire personnel for their co-operation and their dedication throughout the first year of existence of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government.

In closing, I can assure you that the personnel and the elected officials will continue to work with dedication and professionalism to offer all our citizens the best services possible and favourable conditions for their development.

Manon Cyr
Chairperson

Appendix to the Chairperson's report on the financial situation of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government

According to Section 474.1 of the Cities and Towns Act, the mayor presents the list of all contracts representing an expenditure of over \$25,000 signed since the last Council meeting during which the mayor presented a report on the financial situation of the municipality. Included in this list are the contracts of over \$2,000 signed with a same contractor when the total of these contracts represents an expenditure of over \$25,000. This list indicates, for each contract, the name of the contractor, the purpose of the contract and the amount.

LOCALITY OF VALCANTON		
Name of contractor	Purpose of contract	Amount
Les installations sportives AGORA inc.	Skating rink project	38,602.86 \$
Gaston Bouchard	Transportation of gravel - Extension of the drinking water network - Val-Paradis	27,972.65
9180-0508 Québec inc.	Machinery rental	52,083.67
Distribution Couvre-Planchers Élite inc.	Siding work - Skating rink	27,823.03
Municipality of Normétal	Fire protection	44,209.01
9102-6088 Québec inc.	Excavation work and machinery rental	36,359.87
	Total	227,051.09 \$
LOCALITY OF VILLEBOIS		
Name of contractor	Purpose of contract	Amount
Excavation E. Lavoie inc.	Gravel reload - Range 10 and 1 Road - Turgeon Lake	45,885.95 \$
Gabriel Aubé inc.	Crushed stone reload MG-20 - Turgeon Lake - Villebois	32,813.87
Plomberie Marcel Massé inc.	Replacement of two boilers 250 MBTU/H	27,565.26
Tessier Récréo-Parc inc.-	Skate Park project	25,526.75
	Total	131,791.83 \$
LOCALITY OF RADISSON		
Name of contractor	Purpose of contract	Amount
B. Arsenault Électrique inc.	Over-pressure plant	31,403.12 \$
Trois-Lacs School Board	Drinking water training	26,842.06
Les Constructions Radisson inc.	Equipment transportation	90,486.47
Lou-Tec 9084-2949 Québec inc.	Machinery rental	59,761.49
Réseau de communications Eeyou	Broadband network project	31,467.36
	Total	239,960.50 \$
FUND FOR THE INTRAMUNICIPAL LOTS AND SCATTERED LOTS		
Name of contractor	Purpose of contract	Amount
Ancil, Ayotte et Associés (Groupe 3A) inc.	Sylviculture work and forestry operations	919,874.65 \$
Ressources Baie-James	Professional dues - Planning, forest management and site monitoring	50,541.97
	Total	970,416.62 \$
EYYOU ISTCHEE JAMES BAY REGIONAL GOVERNMENT		
Name of contractor	Purpose of contract	Amount
Association des propriétaires de chalets - Lac Cavan	Rebuilding the access road	36,700.00 \$
Comité de citoyens de la Baie Dunlop	Rebuilding the access road	151,373.00
Club Motoneige Matagami	Machinery rental	25,662.42
Railroad company	Railway crossing agreement	35,700.00
Hardy Ringuette Automobiles inc.	Purchase of a vehicle	43,856.55
Hydro-Québec	Waste collection and disposal	30,750.06
Lemieux, Ryan & Associés	General insurance coverage	41,476.87
Max Aviation	Plan rental for Council meetings	28,867.78
Nivelage Forestiers L.B.	Machinery rental	218,860.80
Nûkun Media	Livestream on the Web - Council meetings	25,424.30
PG Solutions inc.	Maintenance contract 2014	34,274.02
Société d'Analyse Immobilière Abitibi inc.	Property assessment contract	253,399.59
Soma Auto inc.	Purchase of two vehicles	69,349.24
Somavrac C.C. inc.	Purchase of calcium	53,365.07
Spiegel Sohmer avocats	Professional fees - legal services	27,438.22
Daniel Tétreault, CA	Professional fees - external auditor	25,574.06
James Bay Development Corporation	Office space rental	123,014.69
Traduction et Audiovisuel NishNabe	Multilingual interpretation services - Council meetings	72,164.04
Union des municipalités du Québec	General insurance coverage	25,822.25
	Total	1,323,072.96 \$
	Grand total	2,760,501.17 \$

The year behind and the year ahead

Eeyou Istchee leaders share their highs, lows and hopes for the future

by Amy German

As families celebrate the end of another year and shed their burdens for the season, many of us find ourselves contemplating what was and what could be when the world picks up again in the New Year.

Looking back on the events of the past year, *the Nation* once again approached leaders from across the territory to find out how 2014 went for leaders of communities, entities, major businesses and organizations.



RODNEY MARK
THE DEPUTY GRAND CHIEF
GRAND COUNCIL OF THE CREES

Greetings to all, may all of you have a safe and relaxing holidays and a super Happy New Year. Be kind, be cool, be awesome and be silly!

My biggest lows in 2014 were that I was not able to visit the communities more on the mining and justice files. I was also unable to attend certain events at the

We asked these individuals to speak from their hearts by answering the following three questions:

1) What were your biggest highs and lows of 2014?
2) What lessons or wisdom from 2014 will you be taking into the New Year?

3) What are your goals for 2015?

While most responded directly to the questions (as the numbers beside their paragraphs indicate), some chose to make comments about the year in general.

local level due to conflicting schedules, such as the Broadback River Youth expedition.

On the other hand, my greatest highs were meeting with four of the coastal communities on sea and land concerns as well as the protected areas files.

I also had the wonderful opportunity to work with both the Recreation Department and the Cree School Board.

And, not to forget, doing presentations for Roundtable Capacity Building was an incredible experience as it was really interesting to get to listen to local history presented by local people. I found this to be so very positive and inspiring.

As for my goals for 2015, I would like to travel less! (LOL, just kidding!) Instead, let's say that I would like to work hard and spend more time with the communities.

These are my other Kickass Goals for the New Year:

- Visit at least four communities on Justice issues;
- Ensure Recreation and CSB work together for the healthy development of our children;
- Have mining conferences in the communities;
- Initiate a kickass land use plan for Eeyou Istchee; and
- Smile more.

Quote to live by this year:

"I am too positive to be doubtful, too optimistic to be fearful and too determined to be defeated." Of course do it with a Kickass Attitude.



The Bosum Family

ABEL BOSUM

CREE-QUEBEC RELATIONS NEGOTIATOR
CREE REGIONAL AUTHORITY/GRAND COUNCIL OF
THE CREES

1) On the professional side of my life, the things that stand out for me as the most significant achievements were, first, the inauguration of the new Regional Government following the successful negotiations of our Governance Agreement. It was very fulfilling to see the fruits of our hard work realized when that first meeting of the Regional Government took place in Waskaganish.

We also saw the conclusion and the beginnings of the implementation of important IBAs [impact benefits agreements] – the Nemaska Lithium project and the BlackRock project with Oujé-Bougoumou. Whenever we are successful in completing an IBA or a PDA [pre-development agreement], we are really demonstrating to everyone the important and the continuing role of the Cree people within Eeyou Istchee, and we are declaring through these agreements that no development can take place in our traditional territory without our consent and without our involvement.

I was also pleased to see that the very successful Roundtable on Capacity-Building, which was first held in Ottawa in 2013, was taken to all the communities so that the important message of that initiative could be brought to a wider audience and shared with the youth and the larger population in all our communities. This initiative was well received and the message was loud and clear about the important role our youth will have in the future of the Cree Nation.

On the personal side, I have to say that it is sometimes difficult to categorize certain events as highs or lows. As you know, in 2014 I lost my dad after a lengthy illness. I still miss him terribly and I am sad whenever I think about him. But at the same time, I have come to accept that knowing him, even for the short time that I did, was a gift. And I am grateful for that gift. In fact, his passing has made me much more sensitive and much more grateful for the wonderful people in my life starting with my family, and then my friends and my colleagues. My dad being in my life, and also his passing, have enriched my life and made the important people in my life so much more precious to me. And just maybe I wouldn't have come to this perspective at this point in my life without having had all those experiences with my dad, including his passing.

Recently, I also lost my aunt, Sarah Bosum Dixon. I also lost a very dear friend with the passing of David Mianscum, and there are other Elders who were part of my life who have sadly passed. I will miss them too, and I am grateful to have had them all in my life.

2) Our Cree Nation has been through a lot over the years, and one of the most important lessons I have learned, and I have even been reminded of it this past year, is that when it comes to our achievements

“WE CAN NEVER TAKE ANYTHING FOR GRANTED, WE CAN NEVER LET OUR GUARD DOWN WHEN IT COMES TO PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS, AND WE NEED TO BE ALWAYS VIGILANT AND ALERT TO ANY EFFORTS TO TRY TO DIMINISH OR ERODE OUR TREATY RIGHTS AND OUR ABORIGINAL RIGHTS.”

as a Nation, we can never take anything for granted, we can never let our guard down when it comes to protecting our rights, and we need to be always vigilant and alert to any efforts to try to diminish or erode our treaty rights and our Aboriginal rights.

What this means practically looking forward is that we must educate our young people about our history and our rights and try to find ways to instill that sensitivity towards our Cree rights so that they will know when to be cautious and when to be courageous in the defense of our rights. This is a challenge, I think,

that goes along with our Capacity-Building efforts, because part of our ability to successfully govern ourselves and become the important players in the economy of Eeyou Istchee is going to require that we are always making sure that our Cree rights are being protected and promoted.

At the same time, we also need to maintain useful and practical relationships with all levels of government, from the highest levels including ministers, deputy ministers and associate deputies, to the bureaucratic level, all of whom we need to deal with at one point or another. And, of course, we always need to be persistent and always be on the lookout for creative ways of achieving our goals. We should not always take “No” for an answer, and we need to develop the wisdom to know how to deal with the “No’s” effectively.

3) We have a lot on the agenda for 2015 including the continued work in implementing the Governance Agreement, dealing with new development projects in the region, dealing with the new provincial government on its Plan Nord, we still need to deal with the uranium issue, forestry, protected areas, and there are many community-based projects that we will be assisting with. The goal, as always, is to keep promoting the central role of the Cree Nation in Eeyou Istchee, and at the same time, helping the communities with important projects that improve the quality of life in our communities.

Finally, I want to thank my wife Sophie (the wind beneath my wings), my family, my friends, my co-workers and the Cree people for their confidence and support for the entire leadership team as we stay on the path of building our Cree Nation. Meegwetch.

KATHLEEN WOOTEN

CHAIRPERSON, CREE SCHOOL BOARD

1) A highlight for the Cree School Board for 2014 was the visit from the Quebec Ministers of Education and Native Affairs in October 2014.

The two ministers visited two Cree communities: Wemindji and Mistissini. While in Wemindji, the Minister of Education announced the new elementary school for the community.

In Mistissini, the ministers visited the new clinic, Youth Healing Services and Voyageur Memorial School. The ministers thoroughly enjoyed their visit at the school where they learned from the students how to carve a snow shovel during a Cree culture class.

2) There are times as a leader, a council or a board that you will have to make decisions that can become controversial. But, in spite of this controversy, you have to stand by this decision with a clear conscience knowing that you have made the best possible decision based on good principles, integrity and fairness.

3) My goals for 2015 are:

- To continue to lead the Cree School Board with integrity, reliability and to be accountable to the Cree Nation;

- To support the Director General, all CSB staff and our local schools in their endeavours to improve education in Cree communities; and

- To connect, communicate and collaborate with Cree communities in the provision of quality education to Cree children.

I wish all members, young and old, of the Cree Nation a safe, joyful and wonderful Christmas. I wish everyone a healthy, prosperous and happy New Year!





CHIEF REGGIE NEEPOSH
OUJE-BOUGOUMOU CREE NATION

It is my distinct pleasure to pass along to the people of Eeyou Istchee my personal reflections on the year, which we are about to conclude, and to share my views of what we in Ouje-Bougoumou can expect for the year to come.

2014: An Historic Milestone

2014 was truly an historic year for the people of Ouje-Bougoumou. After many decades of struggle and enduring difficult living conditions, we have finally fulfilled the dreams and visions of those Elders who put us on a path of reclaiming our rights, reclaiming our dignity and taking our proper place in the life of Eeyou Istchee. We remain forever grateful to those people throughout Eeyou Istchee who encouraged us and supported us over the course of many years. Meegwetchee.

Cree Roundtable on Capacity-Building

Now that we have been officially recognized, and now that we are ready to take our place in the economic and political life of Eeyou Istchee, it seems only fitting that we acknowledge that the future of our community, and the future of the Cree Nation, will depend on the ability of



Cree Nation of Mistissini

*The Cree Nation of Mistissini
has a wish for everyone for the New Year:
May 2015 bring you peaceful hearts,
bountiful blessings and the best of health.*

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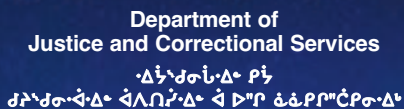




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“ON MAY 15, WE FINALLY COMPLETED ALL THE REQUIREMENTS AND ALL THE STEPS FOR OUJE-BOUGOUMOU TO BE FULLY RECOGNIZED AS A CREE COMMUNITY UNDER THE JAMES BAY AND NORTHERN QUEBEC AGREEMENT. **WE NOW POSSESS ALL THE RIGHTS, DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE OTHER CREE FIRST NATIONS OF EYYOU ISTCHEE.**”

our youth to develop the skills and the ability to truly govern the territory and to be involved directly in the development of our region. We have taken to heart the vision of our collective Cree future, which was shared with us by our Cree leaders over the course of the session of the Cree Roundtable on Capacity-Building, which was held in our community.

In Ouje-Bougoumou, although we all worked extremely hard over a long period of time to have our own community where we could raise our children in a healthy environment and create the possibilities for a prosperous future for them, at the same time, we also believe that our village was a gift which was given to us to take care of. We would not be responsible leaders or responsible parents if we were to take this gift for granted and if we squandered the opportunities associated with having a permanent place within Eeyou Istchee to call home.

We were grateful to hear all the presenters at the Capacity-Building Roundtable and we in Ouje-Bougoumou are committed to doing what we can to continue to bring their message to our Youth, to encourage them to stay in school and develop the knowledge and the skills to take our community, and to take our Cree Nation to yet a higher level of development.

Looking Forward

We are looking eagerly forward to a very busy and eventful year in 2015 and we anticipate a number of important achievements.

Heavy Metal Clean-up of Doré Lake

For the past nearly 15 years, Ouje-Bougoumou has been actively involved in bringing attention to the presence of heavy-metal contamination in the vicinity of a number of abandoned mines within the Ouje-Bougoumou traditional territory. Once our community learned about this potential environmental disaster our previous leaders worked very hard to have the Quebec government take this matter seriously. As a result of our insistence, a number of critical scientific studies were carried out to determine the seriousness of this situation at the worst of these locations. These studies

were carried out on a joint basis by Ouje-Bougoumou and Quebec.

As a result of our determination and our insistence Quebec has now agreed to devote significant financial resources to carry out the required activities to clean up the contamination and to restore the site. As a consequence of Ouje-Bougoumou's central role in our having arrived at this juncture, Ouje-Bougoumou will now play a central role in the work related to implementing a jointly approved Restoration Plan. We will be working diligently over this coming year to ensure that much of the employment and contracting work associated with the restoration project will benefit Ouje-Bougoumou, the Cree Nation and our Jamésien neighbours.

Reopening of Capissisit Lodge

I am pleased to announce that early in 2015 we will complete a major renovation of our local hotel/restaurant, the Capissisit Lodge. This renovation consists of the doubling of the number of rooms to 24, an expansion of our restaurant and the addition of modern, state-of-the-art conference facilities. We will now be in a position to host Cree entities, communities and groups looking for a comfortable setting for their meetings, retreats and other gatherings. We look forward to accommodating our visitors in larger numbers in a much nicer setting.

There are many other projects and activities which we are looking forward to in the new year including the completion of a new gymnasium connected to our Youth Centre, the negotiation of more pre-development agreements with mining exploration companies thereby consolidating our role with respect to development in the territory, and we will continue to work with BlackRock Metals pursuant to our IBA with them for the benefit of our community members.

2015 promises to be a very busy year.

In closing, on behalf of our council, we want to wish the people of Ouje-Bougoumou and the Cree Nation and our Jamésien neighbours, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2015.



GORDON J. BLACKNED
CHIEF OF WASKAGANISH

The "highs" for Waskaganish in 2014:

I guess one of those would have to be when the Waskaganish First Nation became the proud host community for the historic inauguration of the Eeyou Istchee James Bay Regional Government on January 21, 2014. Ironically, Waskaganish (formerly Fort Charles, then Rupert's House) is the oldest Cree settlement and for it to host this inauguration marks yet another milestone in its almost 350-year history.

Another high is the recent approval of the community store project by Council this past fall. We are anticipating construction to begin in the spring of 2015. This

project will provide our community with approximately 30 full-time jobs once it opens its doors. The community is eagerly looking forward to this project.

The construction of a brand-new fire hall is also worthy of mention. Our current fire hall is over 30 years old and certainly needed to be replaced. We anticipate completion of this important facility sometime this coming spring.

The "lows":

As encountered by most First Nations communities, Waskaganish has faced its own share of financial problems, more specifically in special and capital projects due to cost over-runs, among other reasons. This situation has hindered progress of certain projects and services to the community. Council has had to adopt stringent financial measures by means of a Management Action Plan since April 2014. Significant fiscal improvement has resulted thus far and we should be reasonably in good standing within the next several months.

2) What lessons or wisdom from 2014 will you be taking into the New Year?

A very important one would have to be financial accountability whereby proper implementation of the WFN Financial Bylaw by all budget supervisors would require due diligence. This is one very important area in ensuring proper functioning of our organization due to the demands and pressures of AANDC on First Nations financial accountability and transparency.

3) Goals for 2015:

- To realize the planning and eventual relocation of various CNG regional departments to Waskaganish, which would provide additional employment opportunities for community members.

- Pursue the remedial measures projects as called for in the Hydro-Québec/Cree Nation Re-Appropriation Agreement signed in August 2013. This relates to the navigation issue in Rupert Bay, following the diversion of the Rupert River.

- Continue to implement the WFN Financial Bylaw to ensure financial accountability and clear the deficit situation currently encountered.

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ROBERT BARIBEAU
 PRESIDENT/CEO
 CREE CONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT COMPANY
 Hello Cree Nation!

I am hoping that everyone has had a positive year and that you are doing well. Here at CCDC and Gestion ADC we have had a good year.

It has been a year of many changes and we are happy to report that both companies and their partners are doing well.

Through some of our partnerships we have accomplished so much and I want to thank all of the people who work on the different projects for their dedication and hard work. Some of you have to spend time away from your families to work on the different work-sites and I can appreciate this sacrifice you make to provide for your families.

Communication is so important and I have to say that we are grateful to have a great relationship with our partners and employees.

As we look to the New Year, we look to being a part of the various projects happening in our territory. As Crees we have proven time and time again that we can contribute to any development in our territory. As a Nation we have come a long way and we should be proud of our skilled workers in all areas.

We are hopeful 2015 will be even better and that we will continue to prosper and also be a place where people from all of Eeyou



Istchee can find employment and continue to grow professionally.

Last but not least, I want to take the time to thank all of our partners and our clients for placing their trust in us. Without them this would not be possible!

Wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season and a wonderful New Year!!!

Our wish for you is to have a wonderful holiday season.
 May the New Year bring you joy, love and prosperity.

Happy New Year from all of us at Cree School Board.

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The Chairperson and Council of Commissioners,
 Director General and Senior Directors of Cree School Board.

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 Cree School Board
 Commission scolaire Crie



ROBERT AUCLAIR
DIRECTOR OF YOUTH PROTECTION/PROVINCIAL
DIRECTOR
CREE BOARD OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES OF
JAMES BAY

As Youth Protection Director for the Cree Nation of Eeyou Istchee, one of my professional highs in 2014 was the addition of 21 new positions who work to help Cree children and their families and the implementation of a four-year training plan for the employees aiming to improve services to the Cree population by the Cree and the solidification of an organizational structure through an action plan.

However, there's still a high turnover of staff in a difficult but noble job to protect children while ensuring their safety and development. We will continue our work with the Professional Orders so that they recognize that by training Cree workers we ensure the safety and protection of children.

We are all responsible for the well being of our future generations. As in a family structure the values that need to remain paramount as well within any organization is the practice of support, patience, tolerance, understanding and good communication to work together for the betterment of all children – the most precious resource in the Cree Nation.

What awaits us in 2015?

- Collaboration with Cree Police, Cree Justice and the courts to provide enhanced services to youth who come

into contact with the law with appropriate cultural intervention with the aim to decrease recidivism.

- Much-needed funding and updated criteria and amendments are forthcoming with the foster-home program facing new regulations by the Quebec government.

- Implementation of a supervision policy to insure the quality of services for children and families hoping to decrease the turnover rate of workers and provide more support and incentives to develop career workers who develop expertise in their field so that succession planning becomes a reality sooner rather than later.

In conclusion, as DYP my wish for 2015 is for the well-being of all children, youth and their families in Eeyou Istchee. The safety and security of children is the major preoccupation in youth protection work and that we continue to all work together in providing a safe and peaceful environment for our most precious resource in the Cree Nation, our children.



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DIANNE OTTEREYES REID
PRESIDENT, AANISCHAAUKAMIKW CREE CULTURAL
INSTITUTE

1) For 2014, the highlights would have to be two things: Aanischaaukamikw's Regional Tourism Award for an attraction with 25,000 visitors or less, and the first theatre drama, *Mind's Eye*, that toured the nine communities last winter and aired by livestream at ACCI on March 25, 2014.

The low was being unable to secure long-term operational funding for ACCI. Then again, there are always elections coming up, so there is hope!

2) I will never lower the bar in making ACCI a world-class organization that honours our culture and language. Our identity as a Nation is to have a clear vision of nationhood through the richness of our culture and strength of our language. That is our foundation.

3) After almost seven years at the helm of ACCI, I leave the presidency knowing that Executive Director Stephen Inglis and I, with our teams and staff, did one of

the biggest fast-tracks of a construction phase and implementation of operations and programs of an amazing facility. Guided by the vision of the Elders, we accomplished a lot in less than six years.

I will always be an Ambassador of ACCI for the rest of my life, and you will now see me rebirth replicas of traditional clothing from the beaded hoods and men's hunting hats. The Elders have said that it is time we bring back the richness of creativity with our own clothing for everyday wear, at work, at play, for special events and ceremony. Hey, I just might end my illustrious career as a fashion designer! Wouldn't that be really neat?!

As we complete 2014, and to all who have crossed my path of life, I extend the greatest and best wishes for Happy Holidays with family and friends. May sheer joy, gratitude and peace reign in your lives for 2015 with an abundance of love for your loved ones!

PAULINE TRAPPER HESTER
CHIEF OF WASHAW SIBI

1) The highlights of 2014 for Washaw Sibi Eeyou included selecting a site above the 49th Parallel between Amos and Matagami, getting updated with Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come on the file of Washaw Sibi that was submitted for review to the Quebec government and strengthening our relationship with the Algonquin community of Pikogan to ensure a better working relationship between the two communities.

In preparation for the new community, we have adopted a membership code, a Governance Code and Financial Policies.

We also opened up a new Cree Employment Officer position through CHRD and CHRD has been continuing to provide training in regards to the preparation of the community.

We also had a visit from the Roundtable on Cree Capacity-Building and felt greatly encouraged by them.

The Cree School Board paid a visit to learn about our vision as a community. This was the first time that the CSB had requested to meet the Chief and Council.





Have any information you'd like to share with *the Nation*? Feel like there's something the rest of the Cree Nation should know? Well that's what *the Nation* is here for. Call us at 514-272-3077 or write us at news@beesum.ca and we'll look into your story. If you don't contact us, your voice won't be heard!



*May the New Year bring you peace and happiness.
Happy New Year 2015 to all.*

[illegible]

The Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay was able to provide support to the Washaw Sibi Community Healing initiative and so our community has begun its healing journey.

The Cree Alliance sponsored the Chiiwehutaau Healing Journey (canoe brigade) so that our youth could return to the land of their forefathers and mark the gravesites, as well as reconnect with their Elders and reconnect to the land.

However, our biggest low in 2014 were the daily challenges of pursuing our vision of a home of our own.

2) Strengthen the unity between community members and leaders in moving forward with the vision, thriving towards a healthy, stable community.

3) Our goals for 2015 include: pursuing land issues with the Quebec government; strengthening ties and programs with the Cree entities, and relationships with local Cree governments; strengthening working relationship with Algonquin community (ies); restructuring and reorganizing the “band” administration to be progressive in preparing for the new community; developing training opportunities with the members in preparing for new job creation; establishing and training committees; adopting Grievance or Redress Code, Consultation Code; creating a new Cultural Affairs Officer position; developing a management plan for Washaw Sibi Cultural Camp (Joulac Camp), as well as Cree cultural planning; beginning a three Community Healing Initiative in preparation for the Community Wellness program; and having another Canoe Brigade: Mark II “Learning from the Land and Elders”.

VIOLET PACHANOS

PRESIDENT, NISKAMOON CORPORATION

Niskamoon Corporation was established as a not-for-profit organization in August 2004 in accordance with the Niskamoon Agreement. The members of the Corporation are the Cree Nation Government (Cree Regional Authority) and the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee). It is managed by an eight-member Board of Directors, which includes three Hydro-Québec representatives.

Niskamoon provides an efficient framework for the cooperation between the Cree people and Hydro-Québec, enabling the implementation of the Cree/Hydro-Québec Agreements. It facilitates and simplifies access to funds and programs for the Cree people, communities and entities. In addition, it strives to develop projects in close collaboration with the Cree Land Users and other beneficiaries to alleviate the impacts of hydro development in Eeyou Istchee.

All Niskamoon-funded projects adhere to the organization's core values by:

- Ensuring the autonomy and self-sufficiency of Cree land users over time;
- Promoting and enhancing the passing on of traditional Cree knowledge to future generations;
- Maximizing the benefits for as many Cree people as possible; and
- Promoting and enhancing the continued use of lands impacted by hydroelectric development

1) Firstly, we are proud that this year marked Niskamoon Corporation's 10th anniversary on August 24. Many accomplishments and strides have been made within the past decade.

Other highlights this year included Niskamoon's participation in the 34th Annual Conference of the International Association for Impact Assessment - Impact Assessment for Social and Economic Development, which took place in Chile this past April. The Niskamoon delegates' presentations included: “Living with a Large Development Project”; “Maintaining Acceptance for Projects”; “Consultation Lessons from a Project”; “A Model to Alleviate Development on Traditional Territory”; and “Monitoring the Social Impacts of a Hydroelectric Project”. Overall, the participants were well received by the conference. Additionally, during our time in Chile, we had the opportunity to visit and have a valuable cultural exchange with the Mapuche Nation of Chile.

Niskamoon's training programs accomplishments is a third highlight of 2014 that should be mentioned. We had the fortune to have 19 Crees graduated from our Technical



Happy Holidays And a Happy New Year

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Employment with Hydro-Québec (TEHQ) this year. They join all the previous TEHQ graduates as being fully certified and qualified to work permanently within Hydro-Québec. As of this year, there are 61 TEHQ graduates working at Hydro-Québec.

As well we are pleased to highlight that our Natural Environment Technology (NET) Program had its first graduating class, acclaiming all the hard work of creating this program, which was the vision of the late Billy Diamond. Students are trained in the use and management of natural resources, and learn about Sustainable Development, interpretation, protection and conservation including Cree Traditional Knowledge. As graduates, they are now certified Environmental Technicians.

It is important to acknowledge that the TEHQ and NET training programs are only possible with the partnership and participation of the Cree School Board and various educational institutions.

Finally, it is essential to highlight that there were many remedial works for our trappers and land users to alleviate the impacts from hydro development as well as mining and forestry this past year. One project that needs to be particularly mentioned is the Trans Eeyou Istchee Trail, which connects those traplines in which the taly-men took interest. This trail is all-purpose, serving snowmobiles and ATVs. This initiative was well received, and the funding and works have begun.

2) Like in any organization, education and learning are ongoing. We at Niskamoon are learning from our experience in the implementation of the Agreements and from the land users. The environment is forever changing and we need to adapt to change.

As in any funding arrangements, there is a time when the funding starts to decrease, and so we have had to become more prudent and ensure

that funds are not wasted, but put to good use for the benefit of all Cree people.

With this in mind, the TEHQ program will eventually come to an end, but this does not mean that the hiring of Crees within Hydro-Québec should cease as well. There has to be a will to continue and ensure that the opportunity will be there for Crees to work within Hydro-Québec. The fund from the Cree/Hydro-Québec Agreement was earmarked for the program to end by 2017, in which the hiring of 150 Crees within Hydro-Québec would be completed and fully implemented. This has been difficult at times due to the low number of successful applicants and graduation rate. Not all applicants could enrol in the program due to academic deficiencies at first, however Niskamoon and the Cree School Board have worked together to help those Crees get their qualifications to enter and complete the program. Niskamoon is still hopeful that the objectives will be met as per the Agreement.

3) Niskamoon Corporation will continue to encourage the Cree people to enrol in the last TEHQ class so that the opportunity of the 150 permanent guaranteed jobs with Hydro-Québec is not lost. We are hopeful that the two remaining technical programs Automated Systems Electro-Mechanics and Industrial Construction and Maintenance Mechanics will both welcome full classes in the fall of 2015.

We at Niskamoon want to encourage the users of the land to continue doing projects that promote and enhance the passing on of Cree traditional knowledge and practices to the future generations. Niskamoon fully supports the users of the land and those who continue to be out on the land in carrying on the traditional way of the Cree.

We would also encourage the users of the various waterways, the river and lakes, to continue advising and making recommendations to

those of us who work for them, so that their advice and knowledge will be part of the overall facilitation and utilization of their traditional knowledge and wisdom.

With the team that we have at Niskamoon Corporation, we will and must continue to serve the Cree people and we must honour the legacy of our ancestors and we must enable the passing on of the traditional knowledge, the culture, language and the wisdom of the Elders, to the future generations. With a dedicated and committed team at Niskamoon Corporation, we look to the year 2015 with hope for the future. Ginskoumdinnan.



BELLA PETAWABANO
CHAIR, CREE BOARD OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICES OF JAMES BAY

1) It was a privilege to be present when Dr. Darlene Kitty won the Dreamcatcher Foundation Award in Hamilton in October. She is an inspiration to everyone at the Cree Health Board. Darlene works hard to encourage and inspire Indigenous youth

across Canada to pursue health careers. Many of the difficulties we face at the Cree Health Board are caused by high staff turnover and a shortage of qualified Cree graduates to fill professional positions. We need more Cree doctors and nurses, but also Cree social workers, pharmacists, dentists, physiotherapists, and administrators!

2) Strengthening the governance of our Cree institutions is a process. It takes a plan, and a sustained commitment over a number of years.

3) My goal is to continue to fulfill my mandate as Chair to the best of my ability. Our continuing priority, with our partners in the Cree Nation Government and the Ministry of Health and Social Services of Quebec, is to work towards the goal of updating the Quebec

began to accept a concluding question: Is this really how my life is going to end? In Parliament? From there I let go, and waited for “them” to storm in, and perhaps wage a final battle.

From that horrific moment, I think the obvious lesson that I will take from this year to the next is: Attempt to gain from your experiences in life, good or bad, there is always something more you can draw from them than you immediately realize. I look at love in a different way today. I appreciate every smile. I acknowledge every Hello in a different manner now. I see us differently.

Just a simple wish for 2015 – remain healthy, and kind to all. And yeah, of course, to continue to serve from 2015 on.

ROMEO SAGANASH, MP ABITIBI-BAIE-JAMES-NUNAVIK-EEYOU

My biggest high in 2014? Hmm, I can point to several, though none really stand out, and are really too serious for this joyous time of the year. But if you really insist!

How about Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt during the final days of our Parliamentary Session, who did not even bother answering me during Question Period but rather scornfully accused me of being “a Socialist in a tie.” He said that with much disdain, and probably wrote it with a capital S! The next day, I showed up for Question Period wearing a bow tie and asked the Minister via Twitter: “How about an Abo with a Bow?”

Nevertheless! In the unforgiving world of Question Period in the House of Commons, if you manage to get under your opponent’s skin, you know you’re doing the right thing. And that happened several times, not just with Valcourt.

The low point this year is surely the shooting that happened on Parliament Hill on October 22, a brutal reminder that all our lives hang on a thread!

I recall the first gunshot – being Cree – and then the rapid succession of firing; it seemed like an eternity. In situations like that one, you listen to what you are told to do. So as we laid there on the floor, my first thoughts went to my Mom and my three children, of course. You don’t know what is going on out there in the Honour Hall of the Canadian People’s House. So you wonder: How many of them? Why? When are they coming through the door? What will I do? What can I do?

While having those questions and many others rapidly running through my mind, I suddenly realized it was Wednesday – Caucus Day for all Members of Parliament with their respective parties. The vast majority of MPs were there, in those two rooms down the hallway where it happened.

So in my mind I am thinking that these people must know what they’re doing: Wednesday. While trying to comfort others, at that moment, my mind just slowly

“I LOOK AT LOVE IN A DIFFERENT WAY TODAY.
I APPRECIATE EVERY SMILE. I ACKNOWLEDGE
EVERY HELLO IN A DIFFERENT MANNER NOW. I
SEE US DIFFERENTLY.”





Urban get-together

A recent Aboriginal gathering and art fair in Montreal was a hit

by Joel Barde

December's Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network gathering was a blast.

The gatherings happen three times a year, bringing together a handful of Montreal-based Aboriginal organizations to discuss ways to improve the quality of life for the city's First Nations and Inuit populations.

The latest gathering was organized around the theme of crafts, and featured a craft fair and offered a number of free workshops.

Marie-Céline Charron, a powwow dancer from Mistissini who has been practicing traditional crafts since childhood, led the workshops. During 45-minute exercises, Charron walked people

through the steps to make a medicine bag, earrings and a dreamcatcher.

I took part in the dreamcatcher workshop.

Weaving a dreamcatcher was harder than I had imagined. We were given a small hoop, leather rope and a thread to weave within the hoop. Many of the 10 participants – including my neighbour who I repeatedly turned to for help – already had experience making dreamcatchers.

I eventually finished, long after everyone else had completed their own. Rather than achieving a cool and intricate pattern, mine looked, well, amateur.

One of the highlights of the workshops was the friendly vibe and laughter.

Saimata Manning, a coordinator at Ivirtivik, an Inuit employment organization, said that the gatherings are important events for Montreal's Aboriginal communities.

"It brings the Aboriginal community together," she said. "We talk and mingle. It's good to be known in a big city. It's important we're part of soci-

ety and community. It's important for others to know there are programs available for Aboriginals."

Manning enjoyed the dreamcatcher workshop, and in fact, made a stellar example.

But she told me she is not planning on keeping it. "I heard it was bad luck to keep it so I gave it away."

Charron said that a dreamcatcher is a good charm that brings positive energy. Dreamcatchers, she said, were originally an Algonquin tradition that became intertribal.

There were also incredible works at the craft fair, including beadwork and powwow regalia.

But there were also many pieces that were not traditional, highlighting the wide range of works being done by Quebec First Nations.

A young Concordia University student selling a series of postcards impressed me. They were prints of watercolours he'd done of Montreal, its cafes, train stations and urban atmosphere. The colours really popped. The lines were squiggly,

making the drawings look like they'd been done quickly and effortlessly.

Ramelia Chamichian, who works for the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network, organized the event. She put together the agenda for the discussions, organized the workshops and craft fair, as well as two art exhibits.

"It is very important to think of every single detail, to make every member, every volunteer, every craftsman and every person present, feel at ease and comfortable and to basically listen to their different needs."

Chamichian says that the one ingredient that was missing is funding for advertising. Most people found out about it through Facebook or e-mail. And that was reflected in the turnout for people who came specifically for the craft fair, which was quite low.

But no doubt if this can be organized, similar events would be hits. This one was certainly a cool experience.





A Christmas wish for you

by Xavier Kataquapit

Here we are heading into the New Year of 2015 and ready to celebrate another Christmas. When I was younger and still drinking, the holidays were an excuse to party. Although I, and everyone around me, had good intentions to try and have a real family Christmas and then an interesting New Year's Eve, it just never worked out.

Christmas and New Year's for me is filled with memories of hard times and crazy days and nights. I lost my older brother Philip, who was only 16, on Christmas Eve in 1990. I was two years younger than him at the time and I was busy coping with all the drinking and dysfunction around me in my own community.

Memories like this never go away. I thought I would never drink but like all of my peers, in my later teen years, I fell into this addiction as well. I have only faint memories of the holidays over the years. I don't remember much happiness surrounding New Year's or Christmas. As a matter of fact, I don't remember much at all.

For almost 20 years now, I have been living clean and sober. I am one of the lucky ones as I figured out I had a drinking problem at a young age. I am so thankful to all those family members, friends and to Alcoholics Anonymous for helping me to turn my life around. I don't mind admitting at all that I am a recovering alcoholic. I am even proud of it.

I feel as though I have some control over my life and that I can do things I only dreamt about before I became sober. Not every First Nation person I know has a drinking problem. Many people can take or leave a drink but some of us just can't handle it. I am

extremely grateful to realize that I am one of those people who has a problem with alcohol.

I work with interesting people on creative projects. I have traveled much of the world and I plan on seeing a lot more. Getting sober was not such an easy thing to do but in comparison to leading a life in the fog of alcoholism, it was a piece of cake. I know what it feels like to wake up in the morning and feel sick with a hangover, with little memory of what transpired the night before. I know what it feels like to lose family and friends because of alcoholism.

These days I look forward to Christmas and New Year's because I know very well I won't be celebrating them with alcohol or drugs. In the clear light of sobriety, I find it more and more possible to reflect on that tragic Christmas Eve that took my brother. I don't feel so guilty anymore because I understand that I played no role in his early death. I will forever remember him as an adventurous, positive and popular teenager. He was very handsome and had curled black hair. Philip was very kind and open. He was one of those people who could walk into a room and light it up. His sense of humour was amazing but never mean-spirited. Of all of us in the family, he may well have been the most precious one.

So I take time every Christmas Eve to celebrate his memory in a quiet way with good friends and no alcohol or drugs. I think of him and who he may have become if he had not passed on so early in life. I remember the good times we had and how much he loved us all. I know he has always been with me on my journey and by my side. I

know he is proud of who I have become in my sobriety. When I think of him, I will always see him as a 16-year-old, strong young man. He will be forever young in my mind, even though I have grown older.

Now that my dad Marius has gone too, I imagine that they are both together again, comforting each other. Perhaps they are on Akamiski Island at our old hunt camp traveling along ancient traplines or drinking tea around a fire. They are in another world and some day when it is my time, we will meet again.

If you think you might have a problem with drinking and you want to do yourself or your loved ones a favour, get in touch with your local Alcoholics Anonymous chapter which is listed in your phone book and online. Don't be afraid, a simple phone call to a new sober friend at AA could turn your life around. Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



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